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## **USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICIALS CELEBRATE HOMEOWNERSHIP MONTH WITH RURAL MISSOURI FAMILIES**



Left to right: Greg Branum, Missouri Rural Development State Director, Andrea Mayberry, homeowner, and Gilbert Gonzales, Under Secretary for USDA, Rural Development.

Agriculture Acting Under Secretary for USDA Rural Development Gilbert Gonzalez met with first-time homeowners Anna Aguayo, Nathan Armes, Josh Carrow/Crystal Compton, Amber Dooley, Roy and Linda Henson, Andrea Mayberry, Tammie Nelson, Jamie Perry, and Jon Snider, in Park Hills, Missouri, on Friday, June 10, 2005. The visit was part of a series of events being held throughout the nation by USDA to highlight President Bush's proclamation of June as National Homeownership Month.

"In rural communities across this great nation, USDA has been working with rural families since 1950 to bring new opportunities for safe, decent and affordable housing," said Gonzalez. "It is a proud moment to stand here today, with these nine families, assisting them in making the dream of homeownership a reality."

Gregory C. Branum, USDA Rural Development State Director for Missouri and Master of Ceremonies for the celebration, said, "I can't think of a better way to celebrate home ownership than to recognize these families. They have achieved the *American Dream*!"

The nine families purchased their lots in May 2004, five in Bonne Terre, and four in Park Hills. The new homes were constructed by all members of the nine families by utilizing the USDA Rural Development Self Help Housing Program. The qualified families are required to work about 25 hours a week which is approximately 65 percent of the construction work on the homes. As a partner with Rural Development, East Missouri Action Agency provides the technical assistance and construction supervision to assist the families in this program.

The families are excited about the anticipation of moving into their homes. Once all the homes are completed, each new homeowner will have at least \$15,000 worth of sweat equity invested in the home and the satisfaction of knowing they built it.

During their visit to rural Missouri to celebrate Homeownership Month, Gonzalez and Branum presented the nine families with U.S. Flags as keepsakes for this memorable day.

"The Bush Administration is committed to utilizing USDA Rural Development investments to increase economic opportunities and improve the quality of life for rural Missouri families and communities," said Branum. "This is a commitment that is shared by U.S. Senators "Kit" Bond and Jim Talent and U.S. Representative Jo Ann Emerson."

Anyone interested in obtaining information regarding the Self Help Housing Program or any other assistance available through USDA Rural Development may visit the homepage at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mo/> or can contact Kevin Hinkebein at the Farmington Local Office at 812 Progress Drive, Farmington, MO 63640 or call 573-756-6413.

"Committed to the future of rural communities."

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